



Office of the Executive Secretariat Style Guide

2018



**Homeland
Security**

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Foreword

This U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Style Guide provides specific guidelines to assist in generating, as quickly and efficiently as possible, the myriad of ICE's written materials, including: responses to mail from citizens; federal, state, and local government officials; Congress; requests for information from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS); responses to congressional Questions for the Record (QFRs); and written products for ICE leadership. Being responsive to the needs reflected in these written products is central to ICE's mission, and those products must be timely and written in plain English. All employees are required to use this Style Guide in the preparation of these products.

This Style Guide is a compilation of styles provided in the DHS's Executive Correspondence Handbook, the United States Government Printing Office Style Manual, The Chicago Manual of Style, and various other style and grammar guides and manuals.

Suggestions on improvement of the process are welcome and may be submitted via the Executive Secretariat website for consideration.

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Section 1: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Mission

ICE's mission is to protect America from the cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety. This mission is executed through the enforcement of more than 400 federal statutes and focuses on smart immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism, and combating the illegal movement of people and goods.

Vision

ICE uses its unique and powerful combination of law enforcement authorities and access to information to close vulnerabilities that can be exploited to harm our homeland in the real and virtual worlds.

ICE Values

- **Integrity:** We adhere to the highest standards of honesty and conduct.
- **Courage:** We are accountable for our actions, we do the right thing even when it is not easy, and we will always fulfill our duties with courage.
- **Excellence:** We strive for excellence, aspiring to the highest standards of performance, professionalism, and leadership.

Section 2: The Office of the Executive Secretariat

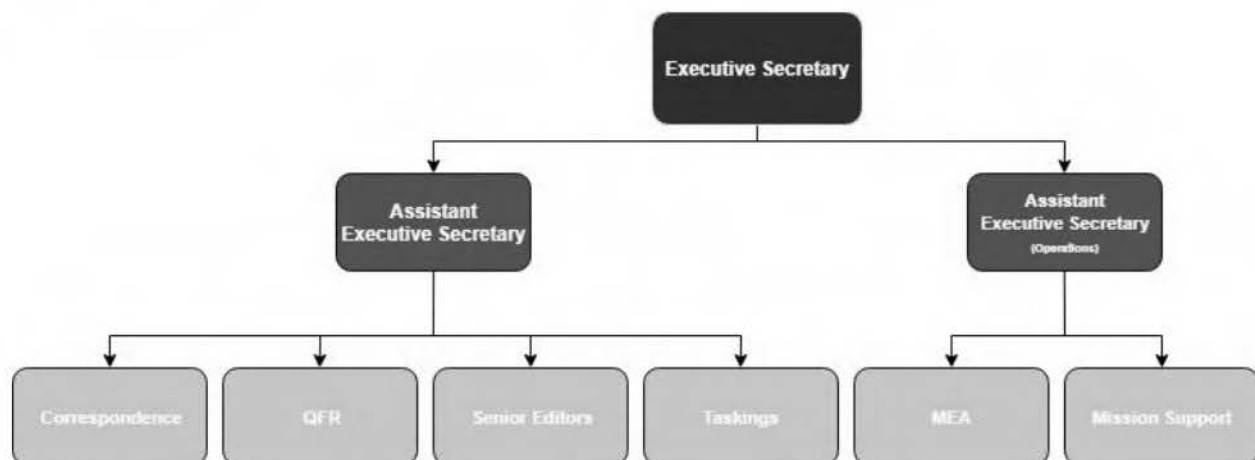
Leadership

The Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES) is led by the Executive Secretary and two Assistant Executive Secretaries.

Mission

ICE OES is responsible for providing professional, timely, and accurate responses to all public, governmental, and congressional correspondence addressed to the agency. OES is also responsible for maintaining a repository for incoming letters and official responses, internally-generated communications, QFRs, and previously-cleared data. With a staff of writers, editors, correspondence analysts, and data analysts, OES is uniquely positioned to carry the pen for the agency, unifying the voice and style of thousands of agents, officers, attorneys, and executive management.

Organization



Correspondence

The Correspondence team is responsible for preparing and/or coordinating agency responses to various types of correspondence originating from external entities, including the White House, Congress, DHS, and the general public.

QFRs

The QFRs team is responsible for coordinating ICE actions in response to Congressional requests apart from formal correspondence. These actions include agency responses to QFRs submitted by Committee members following a Congressional hearing featuring any DHS witnesses, and Congressional reports mandated by law.

Senior Editors

The Senior Editors team reviews and edits a variety of written material for content, style, formatting, and consistency based on established style standards, including the ICE Style Guide published on the OES intranet web page; correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors; revise wording to improve clarity; fact-check materials to ensure accuracy and consistency; and ensure that documents are cohesive, coherent, and are written in accordance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. Written materials include internally-generated documents that require ICE Director or Deputy Director signature, responses to Taskings, and agency-wide broadcast messages.

Taskings

The Taskings team coordinates agency responses to a variety of classified and unclassified information requests from DHS Headquarters or Components by managing the execution of tasks required to assemble and disseminate information for review, comment, approval, or signature.

Metrics, Evaluation, and Analysis

The Metrics, Evaluation, and Analysis (MEA) team provides independent analysis of ICE-only law enforcement data to ensure quality, repeatable methodologies, and consistent trend reporting. MEA also analyzes data in the agency's correspondence and tasking tracker, which is the system of record for ICE correspondence and taskings, and ensures compliance with all recordkeeping requirements; maintains and administers evaluation tools, databases and systems; creates and reports metrics results on ICE-wide correspondence and tasking targets; and compiles financial, operational, and performance data used for top-level planning. The MEA team is also responsible for maintaining the organizational management plan that is used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of OES operations across people, processes, and technology.

Mission Support

In addition to performing general administrative duties, the Mission Support team serves as the intake point for all incoming correspondence, including physical and electronic mail; completes and coordinates all OES Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests; performs correspondence and data research analysis for OES; and serves as the systems administrator for the correspondence and tasking tracker.

Contacting OES

- **Email:** To ensure any question you may have for OES will be handled without delay (and without necessarily knowing the name of the specific person you need), OES uses an address that is available for contacting staff and transmitting materials: iceexecsec2@ice.dhs.gov. For classified materials, please email: JWICS (a.k.a. C-LAN) at ICE-Exec_Sec@DHS.ic.gov.
- **Telephone or Fax:**
 - OES main: (202) 732-6161 (8:30 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. EST)
 - OES fax: (202) 732-6265

- **Location/Mail:** OES is physically located on the fourth floor of Potomac Center North. OES's physical mailing address is:

Office of the Executive Secretariat
500 12th Street, SW
Mail Stop 5001
Washington, DC 20536-5001
"Official Business"

- **On the Web:** ICE InSight (<https://insight.ice.dhs.gov/director/esec/Pages/index.aspx>)

Section 3: Correspondence

OES receives and manages letters and other documents addressed to the Director and Deputy Director. OES also manages letters addressed to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary that DHS sends to ICE. These letters originate from:

- members of Congress;
- governors, mayors, and other state, local, and tribal officials;
- ambassadors, foreign government ministers, and other international counterparts;
- officials at other federal agencies;
- private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- private citizens; and
- members of the immigrant community.

The Correspondence team reviews all letters to determine due dates, drafting/lead program office(s), reviewing programs offices, and signature level. For those letters addressed to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, DHS will determine the signature level and due date.

Categories of Correspondence

- **Secretary Priority**
 - What: Letters from members of Congress; other federal, state, local, tribal, or international officials; or NGOs addressed to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary and tasked to ICE to provide a response. These responses must be cleared by appropriate DHS Components and the DHS Front Office prior to signature, and are often signed by the Component Head. Occasionally, ICE will draft responses to be signed by the Secretary or Deputy Secretary. These are the highest priority for DHS.
 - Final Due Date: 8-10 business days
- **DHS Congressional**
 - What: Letters from Congress on behalf of a constituent, often addressed to the DHS Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, and tasked to ICE for a direct reply.
 - Final Due Date: 10 business days
- **DHS White House**
 - What: Letters from the public addressed to the White House, which are subsequently tasked to DHS and then ICE for a direct reply.
 - Final Due Date: 10 business days
- **DHS Correspondence**
 - What: Letters from the general public addressed to the Secretary and tasked to ICE for a direct reply.
 - Final Due Date: 15 business days
- **ICE Priority**
 - What: Letters from members of Congress; other federal, state, local, tribal, or international officials; or NGOs addressed to the ICE Director.
 - Final Due Date: 8-10 business days

- **ICE Congressional**

- What: Letters from Congress, on behalf of a constituent, addressed to the ICE Office of Congressional Relations.
- Final Due Date: 10-15 business days

- **ICE Correspondence**

- What: Letters from the general public addressed to ICE.
- Final Due Date: 15-20 business days

Section 4: Questions for the Record

After a DHS or ICE witness testifies before Congress, the Committee Chair leaves the record open for approximately 5 days to 2 weeks to allow committee members to submit QFRs that the witness must answer in writing. The Committee submits a list of QFRs to the DHS Executive Secretariat (ESEC) (authorization committees) or DHS Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (appropriations committees). A QFR set can have an unlimited number of individual questions. Either DHS ESEC or DHS CFO (depending on the committee) owns the QFR process, regardless of whether the witness was a DHS Headquarters or a DHS Component official.

DHS tasks individual QFRs to appropriate DHS Components to draft the response. Once all QFR responses are returned to DHS, the QFR set goes through several rounds of clearance, with varying due dates. Once all lead Components submit their draft responses, the complete QFR set must be cleared by all DHS Components, the DHS Front Office, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). ICE must clear all QFRs that were not drafted by ICE but have ICE equities. After each stage of clearance, ICE must reconcile any comments received on the QFRs that ICE drafted. After comments are reconciled, and OMB gives final clearance, the final QFR set is sent back to the Committee.

See below for official timeline and due dates.

Initial Draft Response: ICE has 8 business days to provide the written response back to DHS.

- If ICE is tasked to respond to a QFR that should be assigned to another DHS Component, ICE has 24 hours to return the QFR to DHS with a recommendation of which Component should be tasked.
- The lead ICE program office has 2 business days to provide a draft response.
- Reviewing/clearing program offices will have 4 hours to provide their clearance/comments on a QFR.

Component Clearance of QFR Set: ICE has 2 business days to clear/provide comments on QFRs.

- The lead ICE program office has 4 hours to reconcile the comments, to allow enough time for additional programs and the OD to review.
- ICE has 2 business days to reconcile any comments from Components, DHS Front Office, and OMB.

Tips for Responding to QFRs:

- When possible, use previously-cleared language in the response. Be sure to reference where that language was previously used (example: Language from Grassley response/folder 75645).
- With QFRs, *less is always more*. Responses should be concise and to the point. Focus on answering the question that was asked. This is not the opportunity to promote all the good things ICE has done.
- When a QFR asks for data or a status update, the response should be the data or status *as of the date of the hearing*. It does not need to be as of the date of the QFR response.
- DHS requires Components to address every edit/comment received during the clearance process. If ICE disagrees with an edit, we must insert a comment that explains why ICE disagrees and is reverting back to original language.

- When reconciling Component/DHS Front Office/OMB comments, *only* address the comments/edit. Do not insert new text, unless it is directly in response to a comment. We have a short amount of time to reconcile comments, this is not an opportunity to re-write the QFR.
- If a program has been incorrectly tasked as the lead to draft a response, the program *must* defer to another office within 24 hours of receiving the QFR. When deferring, the program *must* provide a recommendation for which DHS Component or other ICE program office should provide the response.

Section 5: Senior Editor

The Senior Editor team processes all internal ICE actions requiring signature by the Director and/or Deputy Director. This includes assigning programs to review/clear all action memos, information memos, and memos to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or other government officials. The Senior Editors also work with the Taskings team to edit all major Requests for Information (RFIs). Senior Editors also process retirement letters and length of service certificates prepared by the programs, invitations to the Director and/or Deputy Director, and Secretary, and broadcast messages, among other documents.

See below for the common types of documents that Senior Editors review and the corresponding clearance assignment timelines and required clearance level associated with each:

- **Action/Information Memos**
 - What: Action and information memos convey information to ICE or DHS leadership. Action memos require a decision and a signature while information memos do not.
 - Clearance Timelines: Generally, ICE programs are allowed 24 hours to review/comment/clear action/information memos.
 - Clearance Level: Depends on the content and signee, but generally SES-level.
- **Broadcast Messages**
 - What: Broadcast messages convey information to ICE employees through email.
 - Clearance Timelines: ICE programs (generally the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) and Office of Public Affairs) are allowed 2 hours to review/comment/clear.
 - Clearance Level: Standard-level.
- **Invitations**
 - What: Invitations to ICE and DHS leadership (and occasionally, external leadership) to attend events and, at times, provide opening remarks.
 - Clearance Timelines: Generally, ICE programs are allowed 24 hours to review/comment/clear invitations and their corresponding memos.
 - Clearance Level: Standard-level.
- **Length of Service Certificates**
 - What: A certificate signed by leadership for ICE employees who reach milestone years of Federal Government service (e.g., 25, 30, and 35 years).
 - Clearance Timelines: No clearance assignments required.
 - Clearance Level: Standard-level.
- **Retirement Letters and Certificates**
 - What: Letters and certificates signed by leadership for ICE employees who have or will soon retire from the Federal Government.
 - Clearance Timelines: Allow the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) 24 hours to review/clear the retiree in their database (OPR may advise you to use an alternate letter, if necessary).
 - Clearance Level: Standard-level.

Tips for Senior Editors:

- For all internal memoranda, the programs should always coordinate with all applicable ICE programs before sending the documents to OES. The Senior Editors will task OPLA for clearance (and additional programs, as necessary), ensure the documents are in the proper format, style, tone, etc., and prepare the documents for final review and signature by the Office of the Director.
- The Director signs all retirement letters; however, the Director only signs Length of Service certificates for 25 years or more. Program leadership can determine who within the program will sign certificates below 25 years.
- Senior Editors will review, in a timely fashion, RFI work packages that the Tasking team assigns them to edit and format. Taskings folders become top priority for Senior Editors once assigned to review.
- Senior Editors will also review, as needed, QFR work packages and Congressional reports.
- Often, Senior Editors are well-versed in the ICE Style Guide and should be consulted for editing and formatting questions, if any arise, prior to submitting documents for OES leadership and Office of Director review, approval, and signature.

Section 6: Taskings

Taskings are often high-priority, short turnaround requests sent to ICE for action. These are broken down into two categories: RFIs and Review and Comment (R&C). RFIs require ICE to write a response or provide input regarding ICE operations and/or policies. R&Cs require ICE to review another agency's documents and provide clearance or comments relating to ICE equities.

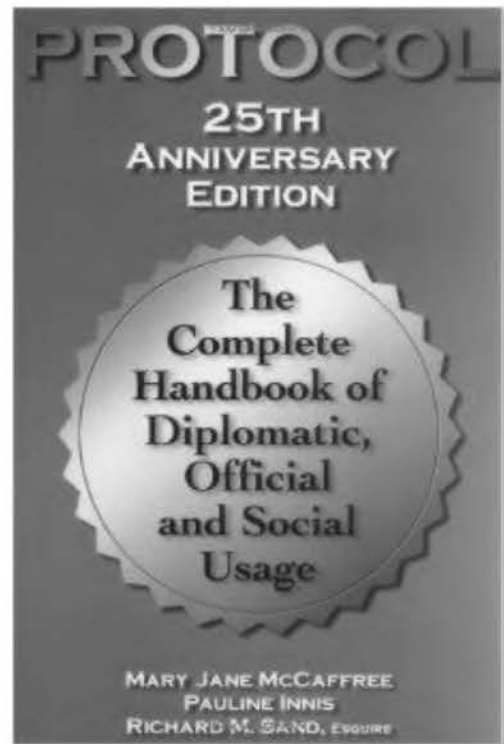
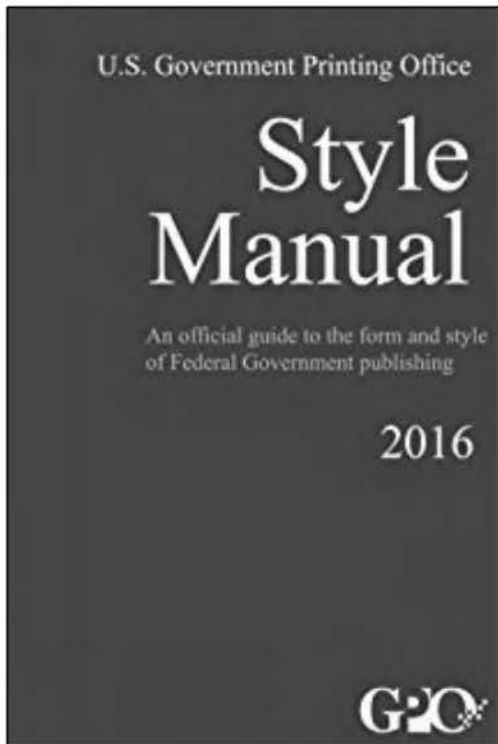
Taskings mainly initiate from DHS ESEC; however, OES can also receive taskings from other DHS Components. A further breakdown of the most common types of taskings is below. Due dates for the programs are based on the final due date for ICE. Often, ICE has less than 24 hours to provide input or clearance. Program offices will often only have a few hours to review. ICE OES provides the programs the most amount of time possible given the final due date.

Common Taskings:

- **S1 and S2 Briefing Book Materials:** These can come in the form of RFIs and R&Cs.
- **Issue Papers:** Often, these are created in preparation for an S1/S2 Congressional Hearing or S1/S2 international travel.
- **Responses to Congressional Letters:** RFI (only if ICE needs to provide input on another agency's response) and R&C (reviewing another agency's response for ICE equities).
- **Statistics**
- **Visa Waiver Program Country Surveys**
- **Point of Contact Requests**

Section 7: DHS Style and Usage Guidelines

DHS uses the Federal Government's Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual as a reference for internal and external correspondence and other written materials. Exceptions to the GPO Style Manual are outlined in this Handbook as comprehensively as possible. The Protocol Book is also a valuable guide for addresses and salutations. Additional reference material can be found in Section 8.



7.1: Letter Set-Up

Alignment

Documents should be left justified with a jagged right margin. In a letter, the first line of each paragraph should be indented one tab stop (0.5") in keeping with the style used by the Secretary.

Attachment/Enclosure

"Attachment" is used for memoranda. "Enclosure" is used for letters. If an attachment or enclosure is included, it should be referenced in the body of the memo or letter. The applicable term is placed two lines (three hard returns) below the signature block of the letter or final paragraph of the memorandum (memo). If the letter/memo has a "cc" line, "attachment/enclosure" will appear below the "cc" line(s) and distribution list.

Block Addresses (in the body of a letter)

When a full address is provided in the body of the letter, it is blocked from the remainder of the text. The address should be aligned left and indented two inches. For example:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Carbon or Courtesy Copy (cc)

When including a carbon or courtesy copy recipient on a letter, place a “cc” two lines (three hard returns) below the signature block. The “cc” is followed by a colon and two spaces or, in the case of multiple carbon copy recipients, the “cc” is followed by a colon and one tab stop to individually align subsequent names.

Closing

The final paragraph of the Director’s letters usually closes with appreciation for the letter, “Thank you for your interest on this and future homeland security issues” (or other language to that effect). If offering a briefing, provide the point of contact’s name, title, and telephone number. Close letters with “Sincerely,”.

Date

OES will date the letter after it has been signed by the Director or Deputy Director.

Font

The Department standard is Times New Roman 12-point font.

Inside Address (also see Models of Address and Salutation)

Use Mr. or Ms. and honorifics (“The Honorable”) within the address block. For example:

Ms. Jane Smith
123 Meadow Court
Silver Spring, MD 20773

The Honorable Joe Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20000

For names containing a suffix, a comma should be used preceding “Jr.,” or “Sr.,” or a roman numeral following the individual’s name. For example:

Mr. Joe Smith, Sr.
123 Meadow Court
Somewhere, MD 20773

In the body of a document, always spell out the name of a U.S. state. Example: “I visited West Virginia.” In an address block; however, always use the state postal code (e.g., VA, MD, and AZ). Insert two spaces between the state postal code and zip code. Do not use periods when writing “DC” or when referring to the quadrants in DC (e.g., NW, SW).

Letterhead

Always use ICE letterhead designated for the appropriate signatory. Joint memoranda and letters prepared for two or more Component Head signatures should use DHS letterhead and the original should be signed by each Component Head, if possible. When a letter or memo is being prepared for a joint signature by principals from separate departments or agencies, both seals must appear in the header on the first page.

Line Breaks

While permissible in a report, do not break dates across two lines in a letter. For example:

Correct: The Secretary had a meeting with DHS Components on
June 19, 2009.

Incorrect: The Secretary had a meeting with the DHS Components on June 19,
2009.

Do not break names or proper nouns across two lines. To the extent that it reads well and does not leave a huge gap at the end of the line, names should be kept on the same line. For example:

Correct: The Secretary had several meetings about security with
Robert Example.

Incorrect: The Secretary had several meetings about security with Robert
Example.

Correct: The Secretary had meetings about safeguarding the United States.

Incorrect: The Secretary had meetings about safeguarding the United
States.

Telephone numbers, dollar amounts, and section numbers should be on the same line. For example:

Correct: For further assistance, please contact me at (202) 555-5555.

Incorrect: For further assistance, please contact me at (202) 555-
5555.

Margins

Format document to 1” margins (left, right, top, and bottom). A right and bottom margin of 0.9” is acceptable. The inside address should begin eight hard returns below the top margin, but should be adjusted based on the length of the letter. For a shorter letter, the distance from the top margin can be increased to center the letter on the page.

Multiple Signatories

When multiple people sign the same incoming letter, prepare letters using one of the following:

- a. In response to members of Congress or other government officials, a single, identical reply to each person who signed the letter. In the last paragraph, state that the reply will also be sent to the others who cosigned the letter;
- b. In response to incoming correspondence signed by a large number of organizations without points of contact, a single reply to the organization that transmitted the letter. In the last paragraph, ask the recipient to share the letter with the other organizations that co-signed; or
- c. In response to petitions or resolutions, a single reply addressed to the person who submitted the petition or resolution, or to the first person who signed it. In the body of the letter, mention the other addressees as a group.

Page Numbers

Documents longer than one page must include page numbers. Do not include a page number on the first page. For letters, the header should be aligned left and should include the name of the addressee, followed by the page number. For example:

The Honorable John Smith
Page 2

For memoranda, the header should be aligned left and include the subject of the memo, followed by the page number. For example:

Guidance on Coordination Procedures
Page 2

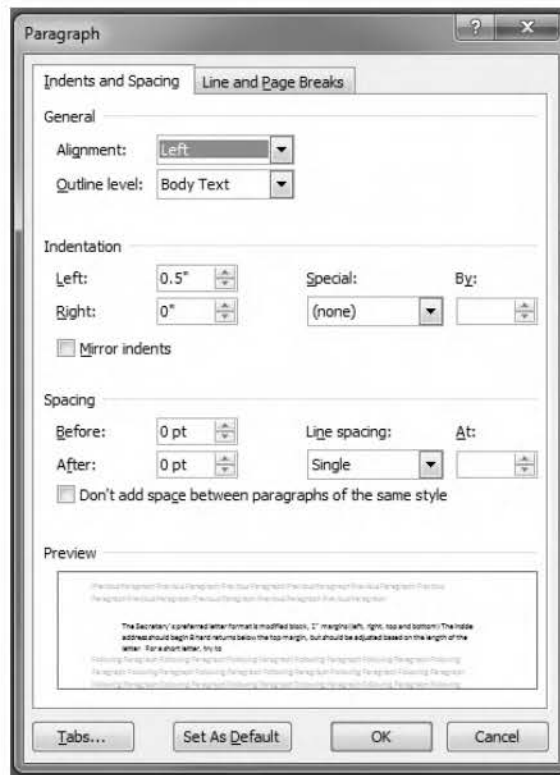
For attachments, the page number should be in the footer and aligned right. For example:

Page 2

In general, keep letters to no more than two pages. If the sender has included a list of questions, respond to the questions in a separate enclosure mentioned in the body of a short response.

Paragraphs

Paragraphs should be single-spaced and indented with double spacing between paragraphs. Paragraph line spacing should be single-spaced with 0.0 pt. before and after.



Salutation (also see Models of Address and Salutation)

Use “Mr.” or “Ms.” for most salutations. Unless a woman specifically refers to herself as “Mrs.” use “Ms.” for women over the age of 12. “Ms.” or “Miss” may be used to address girls under the age of 12, and “Mr.” should be used to address boys under the age of 12. Upon first usage of a name, the individual should be addressed as Mr./Ms. first-name last-name. Subsequent mentions should be Mr./Ms. last-name. For example:

Ms. Jane Smith
123 Meadow Court
Somewhere, DC 20773

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your May 1, 2014 letter on behalf of your husband, Mr. Joe Smith, regarding his employment. The Department has investigated the allegations made against Mr. Smith in 2013.

For Members of Congress who chair a committee, use Chairman [name]. We do not use Mr. or Ms. Chairman/Chairwoman. If the Member signed acting in the capacity of the Committee Chair or Ranking Member, we address them as follows:

The Honorable Joe Brown
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20000

Dear Chairman Brown:

Thank you for your May 1, 2014 letter on behalf of your wife,
Ms. Jane Brown, regarding her employment.

Signature Block

There should be four lines (five hard returns) between the valediction and the signatory's name. The signature block should be indented 2.5" or five tab stops. For example:

Sincerely,

(Director's Name)

Widows and Orphans

If only one line of a paragraph is displayed on a page, begin the new paragraph on the next page.

7.2: Models of Address and Salutation

Addressee	Letter and Envelope	Salutation
The President	The President The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr. President: Dear Madam President:
The Vice President	The Honorable (Full Name) The Vice President of the United States Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr. Vice President: Dear Madam Vice President:
Former President	The Honorable (Full Name) (Local Address)	Dear President (Last Name):
Cabinet Member	The Honorable (Name) Secretary of (Agency) Washington, DC (ZIP Code)	Dear Secretary (Last Name):
Ambassador (American)	The Honorable (Name) American Ambassador (City, Country)	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador:
Ambassador (Foreign)	His/Her Excellency (Name) Ambassador of (Country) Washington, DC (ZIP Code)	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador:

United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States)	The Honorable (Full Name) United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States) (City, State Zip Code)	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador:
Minister (Foreign)	His/Her Excellency (Name) Minister of (Department) of (Country)* (City)	Dear Mr. Minister: Dear Madam Minister:
General, Lieutenant General, Major General, Brigadier General	Full grade, name, and abbreviation of service designation (title) (post office address of organization and station) 00000	Dear General (Last Name):
Retired Officer	(full grade) (full name) (abbreviation of service Sincerely, designation), Retired (local address) 00000	Dear(rank) (surname):
Business/Organization	Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Name) (Title) (Name of Company) (Street) (City, State, ZIP Code)	Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Name):
General Public	Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Name) (Street) (City, State, ZIP Code)	Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Name):

United States Senate

Addressee	Letter and Envelope	Salutation
Committee Chairman	The Honorable (Name) Chairman Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Chairman (Last Name): <i>**The salutation for female Committee Chairs is based on their preference. Contact the Committee for the proper greeting.</i>
Subcommittee Chairman	The Honorable (Name) Chairman Subcommittee on Foreign Commerce and Tourism Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Chairman (Last Name): <i>**The salutation for female Committee Chairs is based on their preference. Contact the Committee for the proper greeting.</i>
United States Senator	The Honorable (Name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Senator (Last Name):

United States Senator District Office	The Honorable (Name) United States Senate (Originating District Office address) (City, State, ZIP Code)	Dear Senator (Last Name):
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U.S. House of Representatives

Addressee	Letter and Envelope	Salutation
Speaker of the House	The Honorable (Name) Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. or Ms. Speaker:
Committee Chairman	The Honorable (Name) Chairman Committee on Government Operations U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman: <i>**The salutation for female Committee Chairs is based on their preference. Contact the Committee for the proper greeting.</i>
Subcommittee Chairman	The Honorable (Name) Chairman Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer, and Monetary Affairs Committee on Government Operations U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman: <i>**The salutation for female Committee Chairs is based on their preference. Contact the Committee for the proper greeting.</i>
Joint Committee Chairman	The Honorable (Name) Chairman Joint Economic Committee U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman: <i>**The salutation for female Committee Chairs is based on their preference. Contact the Committee for the proper greeting.</i>
U.S. Representative DC Office	The Honorable (Name) U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Representative (Last Name):
U.S. Representative District Office	The Honorable (Name) U.S. House of Representatives (Originating District Office address) (City, State ZIP Code)	Dear Representative (Last Name):

State and Local Government

Addressee	Letter and Envelope	Salutation
Governor	The Honorable (Name) Governor of (State) (City, State ZIP Code)	Dear Governor (Name):
Lieutenant Governor	The Honorable (Name) Lieutenant Governor of (State) (City, State ZIP Code)	Dear Lieutenant Governor (Name):

Mayor	The Honorable (Name) Mayor of (City) (City, State ZIP Code)	Dear Mayor (Name):
State Senator	The Honorable (full name) (name of State) Senate (local address) 00000	Dear Mr. or Ms. (surname):
State Representative, Assemblyman, or Delegate	The Honorable (full name) (name of State) House of Representatives (or Assembly or House of Delegates) (local address) 00000	Dear Mr. or Ms. (surname):

7.3: Formatting and Punctuation

Acronyms

- Acronyms must be defined upon first use. In letters that are acronym-heavy, do not use an acronym if the term is used only two or three times; instead, simply write out the terms each time.
- Possessive of DHS is DHS's (the "S's" stands for "Security's"). However, the possessive of USCIS is USCIS' (the final S stands for "Services," the possessive of which is Services').
- The plural of an acronym is with a lower case "s," example PEDs (not PEDS).
- When an acronym is possessive, an apostrophe is appropriate, for example: Law enforcement officer (LEO) and an LEO's badge.

Bold, Italics, Underlining

Do not use bold, italics, underlining, or all capitals in the body of a letter to emphasize a point. Bold, italics, and underlining can be used appropriately in documents as subject headings or in style-specific context (e.g., publication titles and legal references).

Bullets

Format consistently; if bullets are indented 0.5" in one section, indent bullets 0.5" throughout the document. When using multiple levels of bullets, first use a solid circle then, in descending order, an arrow, a solid square, and an open circle.

Ensure proper alignment of bullets, not just within a list but throughout the entire document. If each bullet constitutes a complete sentence, capitalize the first word and place a period at the end of each line. If the bullet is a fragment, you may capitalize the first word of each item and should place a semicolon at the end of each line. In this circumstance, the penultimate line should end with "; and" / "; or". The last line should end with a period, not a semicolon.

In general, try to avoid the use of bullets in a letter (but there will be some cases where it will be appropriate).

Capitalization

- Capitalize Federal Government; U.S. Government; Government of Canada (but not Canadian government); the word “State” only when referring to a specific state or states (State of Ohio or Washington State) or a nation (United Nations Member States); Congress; Nation (when referring to the United States); Southwest Border; and Member of Congress.
- Do not capitalize congressional, national, or federal (except as noted above).
- Capitalize titles, such as Legislative Director Joan Smith and Assistant Secretary Robert Example.
- Capitalize names of specific programs, such as Temporary Protected Status and Global Entry.
- Capitalize proper nouns, such as Department of Homeland Security and United States.
- Capitalize well-known short forms of a proper nouns, such as the Department and Headquarters.
- Capitalize Executive Branch, Judicial Branch, and Legislative Branch.

Columns/Tables

Keep columns of numbers in a straight line with each number right-aligned. If there is a total, always double-check the math. In a table, cells should be centered vertically.

Em- and En-Dashes

An em-dash is the length of two hyphens and is used as such:

- To show a break in thought (almost always used in pairs).
 - My sister Megan—who is 2 years younger—is taller than my father.
- Instead of commas or parentheses if it helps to clarify the meaning.
 - These are deposits—gravel, sand, and clay—but sediments underline them.
- Before a final clause that summarizes a series of ideas.
 - Clarity, transparency, and the Department’s responsiveness to Congress—these are the Secretary’s priorities.

An en-dash is used as such:

- In a combination of:
 - Figures: (202) 282-1000 (telephone numbers); 111-22-1234 (SSN)
 - Capital letters: C-SPAN, CBS-TV
 - Figures and capital letters: I-95 (highway), DC-14 (airplane).
- To mean “through” or “to”:
 - The temperature was 70-80 degrees.

Hyphens

Hyphens can be used when adding a prefix creates confusion. For example:

- re-sign vs. resign

When addressing more than one originator, use “cosigners” not co-signers.

Use hyphens to separate words containing double “a’s” and double “i’s.” Double “e’s” do not require a hyphen. For example:

- preeminent

Or in the case of modifiers, use a hyphen. For example:

- Leaf-eating dinosaur (as opposed to leaf eating dinosaur, which could be interpreted as a leaf eating the dinosaur)

Do not use a hyphen in conjunction with a modifier that ends in “ly.” For example:

- Badly behaved

Hyphens (Numbers)

Use hyphens between the elements of compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine; in adjective compounds with a numerical element (13-week vacation, 24-hour day); and between the elements of a fraction (two-thirds, one-thousandth). Do *not* use a hyphen when using a modifier consisting of a possessive noun preceded by a numeral (12 weeks’ pay).

Quotation Marks

Always place commas and periods inside quotation marks. The placement of other punctuation is dictated by context. If the quoted material contains a question, the question mark would be placed inside the quotation marks. For example:

- She always asks “where are we going?”.

If the quoted material does not contain a question, but the sentence in which it is placed is a question, the question mark would be placed outside the quotation marks. For example:

- Did you hear her say, “I’m coming!”?

Serial Comma

In a list of three or more items, a comma separates each item, including the item immediately preceding the conjunction. For example:

- The colors were blue, purple, and orange.

In a list of items that contain commas, use semicolons to separate the items. For example:

- He traveled to San Diego, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; Chicago, Illinois; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Spacing

Ensure that there are two spaces following a period at the end of a sentence or a colon. Only one space follows a semicolon. In an address, there should be two spaces between the state and ZIP code. For example:

500 12 Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Time

For consistency, always show time in 12-hour (clock) time. Do not place spaces before or after the colon. Use periods and lowercase for “a.m.” and “p.m.” with a space between the time and “a.m.” or “p.m.” The “:00” may be omitted when indicating the top of an hour. For example:

- 8:25 p.m.
- 11 a.m.

Use noon or midnight instead of 12 p.m. and 12 a.m. to make clear the part of the day being referenced. Do not use the word “o’clock” with abbreviations of time. Do not write redundancies such as “10 a.m. this morning” and “10 p.m. tonight.” The “a.m.” implies that it is the morning.

Range of Time

Hyphenate if both times are a.m. or p.m. Otherwise place “to” between the times. For example:

- 8:30-11 a.m.
- 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

7.4: General Syntax and Helpful Tips

“A” and “an”

The decision to use “a” or “an” is based upon the beginning sound of the following word, not the beginning letter. “A” is used before words beginning with consonant sounds, including the pronounced “h” (e.g., a historic event, a one-year term, a united stand). “An” is used before words beginning with vowel sounds (e.g., an egg, an honor, an NPPD record).

Date

Do not use a comma after the year when writing out a date, unless it is a natural break. For example:

- Thank you for your February 12, 2013 letter to President Trump regarding expediting the visa issuance process.
- On December 19, 2013, your office sent an email to the White House.

e.g., and i.e.,

These terms are not interchangeable. “e.g.,” (*exempli gratia*) means “for example” while “i.e.,” (*id est*) means “that is.” The terms are not italicized, and a comma should follow the last period (e.g., or i.e.,).

Fiscal Year

When accompanied by the year, the term “fiscal year” should always be capitalized (e.g., Fiscal Year 2011). It should not be capitalized when used generally. If the term is used multiple times throughout the document, it should be written out in full on first usage, followed by (FY). Subsequent mentions should use FY followed by one space and the four-digit year (e.g., FY 2011). When referred to in general, fiscal year is not capitalized (e.g., during the next four fiscal years).

Numbers

- A figure is used for a single number of 10 or more except if used as the first word of a sentence (GPO Style Manual 2008, Rule 12.4). For example:
 - ICE increased the number of BESTs from 33 to 35 units.
 - Thirty-five BESTs were established in fiscal year 2015.
- When 2 or more numbers appear in a sentence and 1 of them is 10 or larger, figures are used for each number (GPO Style Manual 2008, Rule 12.5). For example:
 - BEST Albuquerque has 40 sworn personnel and is supported by 1 intelligence analyst and 1 administrative assistant from 13 agencies.

- A unit of measurement, time, or money is always expressed in figures but does not affect the use of figures for other numerical expressions within a sentence (GPO Style Manual 2008, Rule 12.6). For example:
 - Each of the five officers seized 2 pounds of heroin.
 - One agent spent a total time of 4 hours on an investigative case.
 - He is 6 years old.
 - *Example:* The 38,000-square foot building house three rooms.
- Numbers greater than 10 are expressed as figures. Numbers smaller than 10 are spelled out, except when GPO Style Manual 2008, Rule 12.5 comes in to play (see rule above).

Phrases to Avoid

Whenever possible, do not use the phrase “as you know/as you are aware.” If the recipient already knows the information, there is no need to include it in the response. And it is never good to assume the recipient knows the information.

Plurals and Possessives

Pay particular attention to plurals and possessives, making certain not to confuse the two. Possessives call for an apostrophe while plurals do not.

Similar Words

Always double check usage. Some specific examples:

- **Accept vs. except:** accept means to receive, while except means to exclude.
- **Advice vs. advise:** advice is a noun, while advise is a verb.
- **Affect vs. effect:** generally, affect will be used as a verb meaning “to influence,” while effect is generally a noun, meaning “result.”
- **Council vs. counsel:** council is a noun referring to a body of people, while counsel is often a verb meaning to give advice. Counsel can also be a noun referring to a person who gives advice (e.g., legal counsel).
- **Capitol vs. capital:** capitol refers to the building where the legislative body meets (e.g., U.S. Capitol, Capitol Hill), while capital refers to the seat of government (e.g., the capital of Virginia is Richmond).
- **Ensure vs. insure:** ensure means to make certain, while insure should only be used in the context of insurance (car, fire, health, etc.).

United States

When used as a noun, always spell out “United States.” For example:

- These individuals are seeking to enter the United States.

When used as an adjective, “U.S.” may be used, even on first usage. For example:

- They are now U.S. citizens.

Include “U.S.” before Departments and Agencies. For example:

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Words to Avoid

- Avoid using filler words like “moreover” and “furthermore,” among others.
- DHS uses the term “Representative” instead of Congressman/Congresswoman/Congressperson.
- Avoid using redundant words (e.g., concerns, regarding, expressing, in regards to), especially in the opening of the letter. Only one is necessary. For example:

Correct: Thank you for your letter regarding ...

Incorrect: Thank you for your letter expressing concerns regarding ...

- The word “impact” should never be used as a verb. For example:

Correct: The decision will have an impact on the organization.

Incorrect: The decision impacts the organization.

- Do not include a Post Script (P.S.) at the end of correspondence.

Section 8: Plain Writing

On October 13, 2010, the Plain Writing Act of 2010 was signed into law. The purpose of the Act is to “improve the effectiveness and accountability of federal agencies to the public by promoting clear government communication that the public can understand and use.” This law changed how the Federal Government communicates with the public, and all government agencies are expected to adhere to Plain Writing Act guidance.

DHS has a vast mission and a dedicated responsibility to secure the safety of the American people. In light of our responsibility to national priorities, such as emergency preparedness, cyber security, immigration, travel, and international trade, it is paramount that DHS present information effectively and efficiently.

Plain Writing Checklist

Does your document:

- address the average reader?

Know the expertise and interest of your average reader, and write to that person. Do not write to the experts, lawyers, or your management, unless they are your intended audience.

- serve the reader’s needs?

Organize your content in the order the reader needs. The two most useful organization principles, which are not mutually exclusive, are to put the most important material first, exceptions last, or to organize material chronologically.

- have useful headings?

Headings help the reader find their way through your material. Headings should capture the essence of all the material under the heading; if they do not, you need more headings. You should have one or more headings on each page.

- use “you” and other pronouns to speak to the reader?

Using pronouns pulls the reader into the document and makes it more meaningful to him. Use “you” for the reader (“I” when writing question headings from the reader’s viewpoint) and “we” for your agency.

- use active voice?

Using active voice clarifies who is doing what; passive obscures it. Active voice is generally shorter, as well as clearer. Changing our writing to prefer active voice is the single most powerful change we can make in government writing. Active sentences are structured with the actor first (as the subject), then the verb, then the object of the action.

- use short sections and sentences?

Using short sentences, paragraphs, and sections helps your reader get through your material. Readers get lost in long dense text with few headings. Chunking your material also inserts white space, opening your document visually and making it more appealing.

- use the simplest tense possible?

The simplest verb tense is the clearest and strongest. Use simple present whenever possible. Say, “we issue a report every quarter,” not “we will be issuing a report every quarter.”

- use base verbs?

Use base verbs, not nominalizations (a.k.a. “hidden verbs”). Government writing is full of hidden verbs. They make our writing weak and longer than necessary. Say, “we manage the program” and “we analyze data,” not “we are responsible for management of the program” or “we conduct an analysis of the data.”

- omit excess words?

Eliminate excess words. Challenge every word — do you need it? Pronouns, active voice, and base verbs help eliminate excess words. So does eliminating unnecessary modifiers — in “HUD and FAA issued a joint report” you don’t need “joint.” In “this information is really critical” you do not need “really.”

- use concrete, familiar words?

You don’t impress people by using big words, you just confuse them. Define (and limit) your abbreviations. Avoid jargon, foreign terms, Latin terms, legal terms, and noun strings.

- use “must” to express requirements?

Use “must” not “shall” to impose requirements. “Shall” is ambiguous and rarely occurs in everyday conversation. The legal community is moving to a strong preference for “must” as the clearest way to express a requirement or obligation.

- place words carefully?

Placing words carefully within a sentence is as important as organizing your document effectively. Keep subject, verb, and object close together. Put exceptions at the end. Place modifiers correctly — “we want only the best” not “we only want the best.”

- use lists and tables to simplify complex material?

You can shorten and clarify complex material by using lists and tables. These features give your document more white space, making it more appealing to the reader.

- use no more than two or three subordinate levels?

Readers get lost when you use more than two or three levels in a document. If you find you need more levels, consider sub-dividing your top level into more parts.

Section 9: Word Substitution

Instead Of	Try
a and/or b	a or b or both
accompany	go with
accomplish	carry out, do
accorded	given
accordingly	so
accrue	add, gain
accurate	correct, exact, right
additional	added, more, other
address	discuss
addressees	you
addressees are requested	(omit), please
adjacent to	next to
advantageous	helpful
adversely impact on	hurt, set back
advise	recommend, tell
afford an opportunity	allow, let
aircraft	plane
allocate	divide
anticipate	expect
a number of	some
apparent	clear, plain
appreciable	many
appropriate	(omit), proper, right
approximate	about
arrive onboard	arrive
as a means of	to
ascertain	find out, learn
as prescribed by	in, under
assist, assistance	aid, help
attain	meet
attempt	try
at the present time	at present, now
be advised	(omit)
benefit	help
by means of	by, with
capability	ability
caveat	warning
close proximity	near
combat environment	combat

Instead Of	Try
combined	joint
commence	begin, start
comply with	follow
component	part
comprise	form, include, make up
concerning	about, on
consequently	so
consolidate	combine, join, merge
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
contains	has
convene	meet
currently	(omit), now
deem	believe, consider, think
delete	cut, drop
demonstrate	prove, show
depart	leave
designate	appoint, choose, name
desire	want, wish
determine	decide, figure, find
disclose	show
discontinue	drop, stop
disseminate	give, issue, pass, send
due to the fact that	due to, since
during the period	during
effect modifications	make changes
elect	choose, pick
eliminate	cut, drop, end
employ	use
encounter	meet
endeavor	try
ensure	make sure
enumerate	count
equipments	equipment
equitable	fair
establish	set up, prove, show
evidenced	showed
evident	clear
exhibit	show
expedite	hasten, speed up
expeditious	fast, quick

Instead Of	Try
expend	spend
expertise	ability
expiration	end
facilitate	ease, help
failed to	didn't
feasible	can be done, workable
females	women
finalize	complete, finish
for a period of	for
for a total of	(omit)
for example, _____ etc.	for example, such as
forfeit	give up, lose
forward	send
frequently	often
function	act, role, work
furnish	give, send
has a requirement for	needs
herein	here
heretofore	until now
herewith	below, here
however	but
identical	same
identify	find, name, show
immediately	at once
impacted	affected, changed
implement	carry out, start
in accordance with	by, following, per, under
in addition	also, besides, too
in an effort to	to
inasmuch as	since
in a timely manner	on time, promptly
inception	start
incumbent upon	must
indicate	show, write down
indication	sign
initial	first
initiate	start
in lieu of	instead
in order that	for, so
in order to	to

Instead Of	Try
in regard to	about, concerning, on
in relation to	about, with, to
inter alia	(omit)
interface	meet, work with
interpose no objection	don't object
in the amount of	for
in the event of	if
in the near future	shortly, soon
in the process of	(omit)
in view of	since
in view of the above	so
is applicable to	applies to
is authorized to	may
is in consonance with	agrees with, follows
is responsible for	(omit) handles
it appears	seems
it is	(omit)
it is essential	must, need to
it is requested	we request, I request
liaison	discussion
limited number	limits
magnitude	size
maintain	keep, support
maximum	greatest, largest, most
methodology	method
minimize	decrease, method
minimum	least, smallest
modify	change
monitor	check, watch
necessitate	cause, need
notify	let know, tell
not later than 10 May	by 10 May, before 11 May
not later than 1600	by 1600
notwithstanding	in spite of, still
numerous	many
objective	aim, goal
obligate	bind, compel
observe	see
on a _____ basis	(omit)
operate	run, use, work

Instead Of	Try
optimum	best, greatest, most
option	choice, way
parameters	limits
participate	take part
perform	do
permit	let
pertaining to	about, of, on
portion	part
possess	have, own
practicable	practical
preclude	prevent
previous	earlier
previously	before
prioritize	rank
prior to	before
proceed	do, go ahead, try
procure	(omit)
proficiency	skill
promulgate	issue, publish
provide	give, offer, say
provided that	if
provides guidance for	guides
purchase	buy
pursuant to	by, following, per
reflect	say, show
regarding	about, of, on
relative to	about, on
relocate	move
remain	stay
remain	stay
remainder	rest
remuneration	pay, payment
render	give, make
represents	is
request	ask
require	must, need
requirement	need
reside	live
retain	keep
said, some, such	the, this, that

Instead Of	Try
selection	choice
set forth in	in
similar to	like
solicit	ask for, request
state-of-the-art	latest
subject	the, this, your
submit	give, send
subsequent	later, next
subsequently	after, later, then
substantial	large, much
successfully complete	complete, pass
sufficient	enough
take action to	(omit)
terminate	end, stop
the month of	(omit)
there are	(omit)
therefore	so
therein	there
there is	(omit)
thereof	its, their
the undersigned	I
the use of	(omit)
this activity, command	us, we
timely	prompt
time period	(either one)
transmit	send
type	(omit)
under the provisions of	under
until such time as	until
utilize, utilization	use
validate	confirm
viable	practical, workable
vice	instead of, versus
warrant	call for, permit
whereas	because, since
with reference to	about
with the exception of	except for
witnessed	saw
your office	you
/ (slash)	and, or

Section 10: Resources and References

Below are some helpful resources that may be used for the preparation of documents within DHS:

Books

- GPO Style Guide
- The Protocol Book
- Elements of Style
- The Bluebook, A Uniform System of Citation

Websites

- DHS Connect
- DHS.gov
- PLAIN
- Council of Federal Executive Secretariats: <http://www.execsec.gov/>
- Online dictionaries
- Grammar websites
- <http://www.usingenglish.com/glossary/>
- Thomas: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> (the website of the Library of Congress; it helps you search all legislation and has links to all congressional committees and all Members' personal websites).